

"My father and I always kept in touch," David insists, even though they were a nation apart most of the time. Jack and Shirley Jones—a name David first heard from his father's lips and associated with a face that smiled down from a giant movie screen—lived in California, he in New York. When at last he met her, prepared to resent the lady who in his childish thoughts had 'taken his father away,' he discovered he couldn't. "It was like not liking the good fairy," he said. But his visits with them were still limited because of distance.

David was busy with all kinds of lessons that began when he was eight, courses in acting, fencing, gymnastics, harmony, guitar—anything aimed toward show business. When he was 12, his mother married director Elliot Silverstein, and David and his step-father became good friends. His life centered even more around show-business.

"I wrote my first fan letter at nine. My father was starring in *The Vagabond King* at the summer theater in Cherry Hill, New Jersey," which was near David's home. In mid-August of this year, twelve years after writing that fan letter, David's concert in the same area was such a sellout that a second one—a matinee—had to be scheduled to take care of the overflow crowd. He'd had to cancel appearances and series tapings because of emergency surgery in July, but David made sure that his very first return appearance would be at New Jersey's Garden City Art Center—a nostalgic return to the section where he once lived, where he'd written his first fan letter, and where his beloved grandfather still lives.

At 21, David is an introspective young man—handsome, talented, headed for even greater successes than he's already achieved—and possessed of an amazing depth of understanding for one so young. He seems to know what life is all about and to have a wise, realistic approach to it.

"I think I was faced with a lot of problems, a lot of situations, which maybe not everybody else has had," he says quietly. His expressive hazel eyes briefly hint at the pain he knew as a lonely little boy who cried for the father who wasn't there.

"I think that every child kind of emulates his father, wants to be in some way like him, because that's his father image," David told Jack Cassidy recently. "I suppose without consciously knowing it, you had a definite effect on me."

When Jack asked candidly if his parents' divorce had hurt him, David was unprepared for the question. But he answered it honestly. *They both knew the real answer before David put it into words.*

"Yes," David said thoughtfully. "It hurt me. I don't think I was around you as much as I should have been. *I think anyone who comes from a broken home has to suffer to some degree.*"

He didn't pull any punches. David has

suffered. His warm comfortable world was suddenly torn apart by forces he didn't understand. But David is an unusually perceptive young man and, when circumstances beyond his control changed his life, he turned them into some kind of strength for himself.

"I've never held any resentment toward my father because of the divorce," he said. "I was sad about it, but I didn't resent him. I'm old enough now to understand what can happen between people."

It's true that distances kept David and his father apart—that a divorce came between a boy and his dad at a time important to both of them. Yet both knew in their hearts that love need not be gauged by nearness. When bitterness is not allowed to grow, neither time nor distance dim love and admiration. They can become, instead, an inspiration.

### GEORGE KENNEDY

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re-enlisted. He'd lost his father when he was only four, and as he put it, "Nobody was looking for me. I had no roots, no family home to go back to. My mother had remarried, and the civilian employment picture for returning servicemen was pretty bleak. . . ."

He put in a total of 16 years, garnering a pair of bronze stars, a cache of medals, a commission (toward the end)—and a serious back injury, the result of a German grenade explosion, during a walk through Heurtgen Forest.

The blast threw him over 20 feet, came within inches of killing him—and left him with back damage that has periodically given him real trouble. Despite surgery and recurring hospitalization over a three year period, George wound up having to wear a steel brace from the waist up, in order to stand or walk, and even then for limited hours.

He was discharged from the army with 30% disability (a toss-up between that and a spine-fusion operation that he waived in favor of the disability and the possible chance of some other remedy later.) But his last assignment while on duty resulted in civilian employment. He was technical adviser for the *Sargeant Bilko* TV show—and he stayed on with Phil Silvers after his discharge, until the show folded. Then he headed for cinema land, with an introductory letter from Silvers to Hollywood agent Lou Sherill.

Sherrill told him, "We need big guys to get knocked down. I'll guarantee you more work out here than you'll get in New York. . . ." and that was the beginning of George's adult acting career. Technically, he'd had a bit of experience. His parents were showbusiness people. His father was a pianist-composer-orchestra leader, his mother a dancer with the famed vaudevilian Ballet Classique. At 2, George appeared with his parent's touring company, in *BRINGING UP FATHER*. At 7, he

was a regular on kiddie radio shows, but when he hit Hollywood in 1959, his only *real* theatrical experience was a few walk-ons.

"It was perfect timing when I came out here 12 years ago," he says now. Up to then, heroes and actors were all under-six-footers. But with Clint Walker and Jim Arness achieving popularity, he was not the menacing giant. "I was just around," he says. "I always lost—it was just a question of what page it came on."

Change is the essence in a character actor's life—and George went from bad guy to good guy in his roles—from villain to lover-boy. Revel, who was constantly at George's side, commented, "After a run of villains, George has just been signed for his first role as a lover! *At last, type-casting!*" But that was before their marital situation had undergone this season's drastic change.

Filmwise, George has played, "a rapist, a sadist, a slovenly miserable—and those are the *good* things!" He beat Paul Newman to a pulp in *Cool Hand Luke*, the role that led to an Oscar for Kennedy; he chased Cary Grant with a steel claw in *Charade*. In *Strait-Jacket*, he stalked the heroin (Joan Crawford) with an axe; in *Mirage*, he was hired to assassinate Gregory Peck—and in one *Gunsmoke* episode, he plays a lonely man with a mail-order bride—a tender, compassionate portrayal, unbelievably touching, gentle. As *Sarge*, the gumshoe who turned father-confessor, Kennedy is both tough and tender—but he's always the "good guy" . . . as he is in real life.

Until last June, George and Revel and their daughters all occupied a sprawling nine-room ranchhouse in Sherman Oaks—a big comfortable home overlooking the San Fernando valley, geared to family-style luxury, with its sauna in the master bath, its king-size pool—and its special kiddie accessories. There are slides, jungle-gyms, fun-toys for water-babies.

There's a splendid stereo system (George is a jazz buff); a Cadillac in the driveway; a plane waiting at Van Nuys airport. He is also a private pilot, and finds endless pleasure flying his four-place Cessna 'Skylane'—a black and white and orange job that will seat all four Kennedys—or transport one big guy to a lonely but satisfying cloud nine. They're all things that hard work and talent and togetherness have reaped—a special "George Kennedy world" built to share with Revel and Karianne and Chris.

George's role in *Cool Hand Luke* brought an Oscar—but it brought far more than that. "I got \$20,000 for that role," he said, and then went on to disprove the old tale that supporting-role Oscars can also lead to obscurity. (Instant Fame 'Soaring Salary' but fewer roles in the present economic squeeze).

It didn't work that way for George. He stepped into *The Boston Strangler* for \$50,000, and followed it with \$250,000 for